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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/973,675	10/09/2001	Christian M. Heesch	A01153US	5770

22920 7590 01/20/2004

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EXAMINER

ACKUN, JACOB K

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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3712

DATE MAILED: 01/20/2004

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

<b>Office Action Summary</b>	<b>Application No.</b>		<b>Applicant(s)</b>	
	09/973,675		HEESCH, CHRISTIAN M.	
	<b>Examiner</b>		<b>Art Unit</b>	
	Jacob K. Ackun Jr.		3712	

**-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --**  
**Period for Reply**

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

**Status**

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 17 November 2003.
- 2a) ☒ This action is **FINAL**.                      2b) ☐ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

**Disposition of Claims**

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-54 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-54 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

**Application Papers**

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on \_\_\_\_\_ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.  
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).  
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

**Priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 119 and 120**

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).  
a) ☐ All    b) ☐ Some \*    c) ☐ None of:  
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.  
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. \_\_\_\_\_.  
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).  
\* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.
- 13) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e) (to a provisional application) since a specific reference was included in the first sentence of the specification or in an Application Data Sheet. 37 CFR 1.78.  
a) ☐ The translation of the foreign language provisional application has been received.
- 14) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 120 and/or 121 since a specific reference was included in the first sentence of the specification or in an Application Data Sheet. 37 CFR 1.78.

**Attachment(s)**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)                             | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s). _____  |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)         | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152) |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449) Paper No(s) _____ | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____                                    |

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1. The following is a quotation of the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

2. Claims 1-54 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. All of the claims are considered to be indefinite because they are drafted in such a way that it is not clear whether they are drawn to the combination of a stringed instrument and a storage case therefor or to the subcombination of a storage case only, which is for the purpose of storing a stringed instrument. This in turn is because while all of the claims appear to be drawn to the subcombination (note line 1 of independent claim 1 and the apparently clear recitation of "for storing a stringed instrument", for example only), limitations in the claims that are dependent on the instrument indicate that perhaps the applicant's intention is to claim the combination. Additionally, the features of the claimed case now argued by applicant as not being shown by the cited prior art all have to do with the stringed instrument. Clarification of the scope of the claims is required.

As was noted in the first office action "the claims are interpreted as NOT claiming a stringed instrument or any part thereof. Therefore, all references in the claims to a stringed instrument or to any parts thereof are considered only to be statements of intended use with respect to the claimed case. However, clarification of the scope of all of the claims is required. Moreover, keeping in mind that it is by now well settled that features not claimed may not be relied upon in support of patentability, the combination should be claimed in the event any part of the instrument is intended to be further structurally limiting with respect to the claimed case." These comments apply in this office action. Moreover it is also noted that applicant has yet to

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clearly indicate on the record, by amendment or otherwise, whether the claims are drawn to the combination or subcombination as set forth above.

The claims are also indefinite because in several instances the word “means” is recited therein without a corresponding function, making it impossible to determine equivalents of the claimed structure under 35 USC 112 paragraph 6. Note the recitation of “soft means” in subpart e) of claim 26 for example only.

3. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(a) the invention was known or used by others in this country, or patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country, before the invention thereof by the applicant for a patent.

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

(c) the invention was described in a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention thereof by the applicant for patent, or on an international application by another who has fulfilled the requirements of paragraphs (1), (2), and (4) of section 371(c) of this title before the invention thereof by the applicant for patent.

The changes made to 35 U.S.C. 102(e) by the American Inventors Protection Act of 1999 (AIPA) and the Intellectual Property and High Technology Technical Amendments Act of 2002 do not apply when the reference is a U.S. patent resulting directly or indirectly from an international application filed before November 29, 2000. Therefore, the prior art date of the reference is determined under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) prior to the amendment by the AIPA (pre-AIPA 35 U.S.C. 102(e)).

4. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are

such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

5. Claims 1-54 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(a, b, or e) as anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as obvious over Flynn (6,029,804 cited by the applicant), or Walther (4,846,340), or Kovins (4,215,778), or Katz (3,326,359). The claims are interpreted as best understood. All of the claims require a protective case having soft padding or cushioning to protect a stringed instrument. All of the applied references disclose this structure. Since the cases of the applied references have all of the structural elements of the claims, they are presumed to be inherently capable of all of the claimed functions such as the statements of intended use noted above. It would also have been obvious to provide the devices in the above references with the claimed features for the purpose of rendering them more suitable for their intended purposes.

6. Applicant's arguments filed 11/17/2003 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive. Note all of the comments above. For example, the applicant argues that the applied reference to Kovins "shows an inflatable member that engages both the sound board panel and back panel.." This argument is not relevant to the outstanding rejection over Kovins because Kovins was not cited for its showing of any instrument or how portions of the Kovins case engaged any instrument therein. The fact that Kovins shows an instrument is coincidental given that the claims are interpreted as not reciting (and therefore not requiring) any instrument in combination with the claimed case.

7. **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL.** Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO

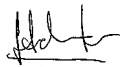
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MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the mailing date of this final action.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Jacob K. Ackun Jr. whose telephone number is (703)308-3867. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday through Friday 8.30AM-5.00PM.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Derris Banks can be reached on (703)308-1745. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is (703)305-3579.

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the receptionist whose telephone number is (703)308-0858.

  
Jacob K. Ackun Jr.  
Primary Examiner  
Art Unit 3712

J.A.